



Teachers' belief on Early Second Language Acquisition in Indonesian Bilingual School

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Abstract

The present study investigated the teachers' belief in early second language Acquisition. Participants were 20 teachers who taught in bilingual school in Serang, Indonesia. The survey was developed by the researcher based on studies on the early second language acquisition. The result showed that the majority of teachers had beliefs on language transfer and some cognitive effects in second language acquisition. However, the teachers showed the misconception on the belief of a critical period in second language acquisition. These findings provide the additional support to the need of developing the belief among the teachers in second language acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

Teachers' belief in language learning influences the successful learning outcome in second language learning. Person's education and experience forms a belief (Johnson 1994, Mohamed 2006) and hence, the beliefs in learning and teaching are formed by after someone completes the education. The teacher's belief is the strong foundation for the teacher to provide the effective teaching practice (Griffith, Gore & Ladwig 2006, as cited in Suciana, 2015). It means that teacher's beliefs are formed continuously from their education and personal experience that converted to their belief.

Many studies about teachers and learners' belief have been conducted by researchers and educators (Bell, 2005; Borg & Burns, 2008; Brown, 2009; Davis, 2003; Horwitz, 1987, 1988; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009; Matsuura, Chiba, & Hilderbrandt, 2001; Peacock, 1999; Schulz, 1996, 2001; Vasquez & Harvey, 2010, as cited in Kvist, 2014). Those studies pointed that the teacher's belief affects the language teaching.

Some studies of teacher's beliefs were conducted for the students' teacher or pre-service teacher in higher education program (Grizalva, 2013; Fojkar, 2017; Özmen, 2012). These studies highlighted to the importance of current knowledge on second language learning to be addressed by the students in order to prepare their future job as a second language teacher that can provide effective second language teaching.

However, the number of studies in second language acquisition field was limited in number. Chang (2015) found out the need of understanding on second language acquisition beliefs to teach different learners at school. Hence, this study will explore the teacher's belief on second language acquisition.

Teacher Beliefs

The early study defined belief as predisposition to action (Rokeach, 1968). Another early study on belief in language learning stated that opinions on a various issues and misconception related to language learning (Horwitz, 1987). The construct of educational beliefs needs a clear conception and deep understanding (Pajares, 1992). Belief is anything that relates to a knowledge or assumption possessed by someone to comprehend the definitions (Borg, 2006).

The successful of teaching depends on the implementation of concepts of teaching. However, personality and belief also influence the outcome of teaching practice. The theory showed that teacher's action and decision in their teaching practice was constructed by the system of personal beliefs that measure their teaching performance, consciously or unconsciously (Johnson, 1999). Furthermore, teachers' beliefs influence their behaviour, and impacting student learning accordingly. The teacher's belief also set the expectation and assumption about learner and learning (Clark-Goff, 2016).

The importance of teacher's belief was significant as teachers usually teach by making their learning experience, which believe is derived, as their teaching inference (Bailey, Curtis, & Nunan, 2001). Furthermore, many studies have shown that beliefs are unlikely to change (Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001). Therefore, teacher's belief will be in long term memory of the teacher which determines how the students will learn consequently.

The beliefs about second language acquisition will consequently shape the learners' attitudes, motivation and learning style. Furthermore, the importance of the beliefs held by language teachers has been related to (a) the self reflection

form their own teaching practice), (b) everyday action and decision (c) response to any change of teaching practice, (d) their process of learning to teach, and (e) students' negative response to the new teaching methodologies or technique (Ferreira, 2013). Belief usually can be shaped by interaction, experience and impact of the environment that they obtained in their education (Grijalva, 2012).

The sources of teachers' beliefs are as follows:

- 1) Teacher was also a language learner before. Therefore, the current beliefs of the teaching were influenced by the way they were taught by the teachers.
- 2) The experiences from teaching also construct the teacher's belief. The method of teaching that work well will be restored as the teaching's belief by the teacher.
- 3) Teachers favour one particular method because they think it is consistent with their personality. This method will be part of their belief.
- 4) Teachers obtain their belief from the education and research (Kindsvatter, Willen, and Ishler, 1988; Abdi and Asadi, 2011; Gilakjani, 2017).

Belief in Second Language Acquisition

The critical period of language acquisition

There is long debate on the existence of critical period in second language acquisition. The critical period refers to the period where we are prepared to acquire the language. The view to this called the critical period hypothesis. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that there is the change in human's brain so the capability to acquire the second language is decreased (Caroll, 2008).

There is the popular thought about the critical period for the second language acquisition is much more difficult after child has reached the puberty. Therefore, it is believed that child about 5 -9 years old is when the language is acquired (Gass & Selinker, 2001).

However, many believe that children are better in second language acquisition only in certain aspect of language for example, pronunciation. Where adult learn better in many aspects of language acquisition because of the cognitive development (McLaughlin, 1992; Lightbown and Spada, 2006; Harmer, 2007).

Language transfer in second language acquisition

The concept of language transfer is that the child's first language influences

the acquisition of his or her second language (Carroll, 2008). The evidence of language transfer exist in second language acquisition can be seen from many studies (Tao & Healy, 1998; Selinker, Swain, and Dumas, 1975; McLaughlin, 1984; Williams, 1980; Flege, 1991, as cited in Carroll, 2008)

The language transfer exists as discourse processing strategies transfer from L1 to L2, substantial number of transfer errors that were attributable to English structure, L2 learners will apply very similar strategies in L2 acquisition, L2 learners begin by perceiving second-language speech according to the categories of their native language, L2 learners do best on sounds that are very different than the sounds in their native language but have more difficulty with sounds that are moderately similar (Tao & Healy, 1998; Selinker, Swain, and Dumas, 1975; McLaughlin, 1984; Williams, 1980; Flege, 1991, as cited in Carroll, 2008). Moreover, second language Acquisition's also has some effects on cognitive development, problem solving and creativity. Research has shown that cognitive flexibility and metalinguistic awareness are developed better in bilingual children than to monolingual children (e.g., Bialystok, 2001; Cummins, 2000; King & Mackey, 2007, as cited in Fojkar, 2017).

The implication of second language acquisition is increasing the cognitive control across the life spans (Bialystok, 2004). The use of two languages encourages development of cognitive control mechanisms, such as when one has to choose a word in one language in favour of another language (Carroll, 2008). The study found that bilinguals student score higher in creativity test than the monolingual students. (Ricciardelli, 1992), The study found that acquiring a second language will enforce the divergent thinking ability, such as fluency, elaboration, originality, and flexibility that will shape the creativity and problem solving skills (Ghonsooly, 2012). It can be seen on how second language acquisition benefit the cognitive development; cognitive control which also affect the creativity that was resulted from the divergent thinking.

So, The purpose of this study was to investigate the teachers' beliefs about the critical period, language transfer, and cognitive effects in second language acquisition. Therefore, the research was guided by the following questions: "How is the teacher's belief in Early Second language Acquisition?"

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 20 teachers in bilingual school in Serang. 10 teachers were teaching in Pre-school level, and 10 teachers were primary teachers. There were 13 participants who had English teaching degree from university and 7 teachers hold non- English Teaching degree. The participant was chosen using purposeful sampling technique from 40 teachers in school. The participants of this study implemented English as medium of language in teaching in bilingual context. All the participants were females (100%) from a various ethnic background; Javanese, Sundanese, and Chinese.

Instrument Development

The data was gathered using questionnaire. This instrument was chosen since the study was aimed to find out the teacher's belief. The authorss gathered the chosen participant in the initial meeting to explain the purpose of the study. The questionnaire was written in Indonesian language to avoid the misconception on questionnaire questions. The survey consisted of 14 statements about second language acquisition with a 5-point Likert scale (1 as strongly disagree and 5 as strongly agree), with some negatively worded questions. These statements were developed by the authors based on studies on second language acquisition.

For the purpose of the study, a questionnaire was developed by the authors, based on a literature review of beliefs about early second language acquisition. Since the existing questionnaires mainly explored language teachers' beliefs in language teaching in general rather than in early second language acquisition. The authors then decided to develop their questionnaire, which is to cover the beliefs in second ilanguage acquisition. The questions were relevant to the second language acquisition theories (Gass & Selinker, 2001; McLaughlin, 1992; Lightbown and Spada, 2006; Harmer, 2007; Fojkar, 2017; Carroll, 2008; Ricciardelli, 1992; Ghonsooly, 2012).

The 14 statements came from three belief categories: The critical period hypothesis (Question 2 and 7), the language transfer in second language acquisition (1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, and 14), and the Second language Acquisition's effect on cognitive development, problem solving and creativity (3, 6, 10, 12, and 13). There were two raters in giving the scores on students' belief.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher invited teacher candidates to participate at the end of a class session. After briefing about the purpose of the study and reviewing the consent form, it took about 20 minutes for them to rate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the 14 statements.

Data Analysis

IBM SPSS 20 version was used to calculate absolute frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation of the participants' belief in second language acquisition.

DISCUSSION

Findings

Component 1 items address respondents' beliefs regarding the critical period in second language acquisition. Overall, this component refers to best age group in second language learning. The second component, referred to as language transfer in second language acquisition, explores teachers' belief regarding to the influence of first language to the second language acquisition. Component 3 addresses participants' beliefs about transfer of phonetics to the second language and component 4 addresses participants' beliefs about effects of second language acquisition to cognitive and aptitude development such cognitive control, creativity and problem solving. Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to measure the reliability for these three components; the result was .752 for critical period, the phonology was .721 and an effect on second language acquisition's Cronbach's Alpha reliability was .602.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to describe participants' beliefs about second language acquisition. Component means for the data on the Second Language Learning Survey items are presented in table 1.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for teacher's belief (n = 20)*

Components	Mean	Std. Deviation
Component 1 : Critical Period	7.30	1.949
Component 2 : Language Transfer	13.95	2.502
Component 3 : Phonology	7.90	2.291

Component 4 : Cognitive effects of second language Acquisitions	17.05	3.186
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The data showed that language transfer and effects of second language acquisitions obtained the high agreement by the participants. Whereas, the critical period and phonology in second language acquisition is still among the debates.

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for teacher's belief on critical (n = 20)*

Components 1 : Critical Period	Mean	Std. Deviation
Acquiring a second language after puberty is much more difficult.	3.25	1.251
Children learn second language better than adult	4.05	1.395

Table 2 presents teachers' beliefs about critical period in second language acquisition. The highest agreement is demonstrated with regard to the second statement, with 80% of all respondents show agreement on the statement that children learn second language better than adult.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics for teacher's belief on language transfer (n = 20)*

Components 2 : Language Transfer	Mean	Std. Deviation
Child's first language influences the acquisition of his or her second language.	2.40	1.142
Errors occur when students reveal tendencies to use L1 features when they are not appropriate in L2.	3.85	.813
The reading literacy in first language influence the reading literacy in second language	3.85	.988
Second-language learners would find the second language that are similar to first language easier to learn	3.85	1.040

Table 3 presents teachers' beliefs about first language transfer to second language acquisition. The result revealed that participants showed consistency on believing that first language influences the second language acquisition.

Table 4. *Descriptive Statistics for teacher's belief on pronunciation (n = 20)*

Components 3 : <i>phonetics difference</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation
In pronunciation, Children is better in accuracy than adult	2.90	.912
L2 learners do best on sounds that are very different than the sounds in their native language	2.50	.946
If the sounds in first language and second language are identical there is difficulty to pronounce	2.50	1.000

Table 4. presents teachers' beliefs about first language transfer to second language acquisition. The result revealed that participants showed disagreement on the belief that when sound is similar it will be hard to learn.

Table 5. *Descriptive Statistics for teacher's belief on second language acquisition effects on cognitive development (n = 20)*

Components 4 : Cognitive effects of second language Acquisitions	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bilingualism will influence the cognitive control	2.75	1.333
Bilingualism will interrupt the students' comprehension of nonverbal subjects	3.65	1.040
There is correlation between cognitive and second language acquisition	3.80	.696
Children who acquire the second language has good creativity skills	3.00	1.170
Children who acquire the second language has good problem solving skills	3.85	.745

Table 5 presents the teacher's belief on second language acquisition effects on cognitive control, creativity and problem solving. The result revealed that the majority of teachers believed on the good effects of second language acquisition. The disagreement was only shown on cognitive control effects

Discussion

The study found that teachers believe that children are the better learners in second language acquisition. Even though, the critical period of the second language acquisition is still debatable by many researchers. The teachers' belief on the critical period in second language acquisition was acceptable. The teacher's belief is consistent with the study that argued learning second language after puberty is difficult since there was the change in our brain (Gass & Selinker, 2001). However, the teacher should concern on the facts that children is a better

learner in only certain aspect of language acquisition, pronunciation. In the most aspect of second language acquisition, adult is better learner (McLaughlin, 1992; Lightbown and Spada, 2006; Harmer, 2007).

Findings related to the language transfer in second language acquisition also showed the majority agreement of its existence in language acquisition. Most teachers believe that error in second language is derived from error in their native language. This belief also supported the study that language transfer is the main cause of errors in second language learning (Johnson, 2004). The majority of teachers also believed that the reading literacy in first language influence the reading literacy in second language. This belief is consistent with the study that proposed the literacy in first language will tend to make stronger progress in acquiring literacy in their second language (Cummins, 2000). In phonology term, the teachers' belief revealed to be contrast with the study that proposed that L2 learners do best on sounds that are very different than the sounds in their native language but have more difficulty with sounds that are moderately similar (Flege, 1991) Overall, the teachers' belief is in line with the study of language transfer by some researchers (Tao & Healy, 1998; Selinker, Swain, and Dumas, 1975; McLaughlin, 1984; Williams, 1980; as cited in Carroll, 2008).

With respect to the third research question, (What are the teachers' beliefs on effect of second language acquisition?) the survey showed that teachers did not see the correlation between the second language acquisition and cognitive development. It is unfortunate belief. As many studies have shown that the second language acquisition affected on the cognitive development especially cognitive control. The cognitive control is the ability of to determine the choice of some options. This ability occurred as the consequence of second language acquisition which is required to choose one language of favour on another in (Carroll, 2008). The teacher's belief is contrast with study that found cognitive control as important initially in second language acquisition, and have significant implications for understanding developmental and neurocognitive models of second language lexical processing (Grant, 2015). The present study joins the growing collection of empirical studies of teacher's belief in second language acquisition

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This paper has two limitations. The first limitation was the correspondent did not accommodate the background of education difference. The difference of teachers' education background will provide interesting findings. The second limitation was the instrument was only questionnaire. More instruments will provide a deeper finding on teacher's belief. Hence, for the further research, the authors recommend the varied teacher's background and more research instrument. The effect of teacher's belief in second language acquisition also will be interesting topic for the further research.

What are the implications of this work for the teachers? The first belief on critical period in second language acquisition where many teachers believe that early age is the right time to acquire the second language. The teacher should concern on their pronunciation skills since it is the most valuable aspect that distinguish the children and adult learner. The ability to pronounce the second language words is more difficult for the adult learner. It is difficult to acquire native like fluency and accent when language learners are more than 15 years of age (Long, 1990). The second belief is that language transfer existed in second language acquisition. The teacher should concern on the first language of the students than provide the maximum exposure to the second language learning that did not provide the space for the first language to be encourage in teaching practice. As the study showed that second learners will apply very similar strategies in second language acquisition refer to their first language and second language learners begin by perceiving second-language speech according to the categories of their native language (McLaughlin, 1984; Williams, 1980; Flege, 1991, as cited in Carroll, 2008). The third belief of the second language acquisition is the effect of the second language acquisition in developing creativity and problem solving skills. The teacher should transfer this belief to the students of second language in order to encourage their motivation in learning second language. Furthermore, this belief should be strong foundation in second language learning which is often seen as a constraint in learning other subjects in first language. As second language learning will increases the four components of divergent thinking ability, i.e., fluency, elaboration, originality, and flexibility (Ghonsooly, 2012).

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